

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)



COVID-19 Parental Resources Kit – Adolescence

Social, Emotional, and Mental Well-being of Adolescents during COVID-19

Updated Aug. 20, 2020 [Print](#)

Resources, by Age Group

[Overview](#)

[Early Childhood \(0-5y\)](#)

[Childhood \(6-12y\)](#)

[Adolescence \(13-17y\)](#)

[Young Adulthood \(18-24y\)](#)

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) can affect adolescents directly and indirectly. Beyond getting sick, many adolescents' social, emotional and mental well-being has been impacted by the pandemic. Trauma faced at this developmental stage may have long-term consequences across their lifespan. CDC's [COVID-19 Parental Resource Kit: Ensuring Children and Young People's Social, Emotional, and Mental Well-being](#) can help support parents, caregivers, and other adults serving children and young people in recognizing children and young people's social, emotional, and mental challenges and helping to ensure their well-being.

Challenges

Change in routines

In addition to everyday steps to prevent COVID-19, [physical or social distancing](#) is one of the best tools we have to avoid being exposed to the virus and to slow its spread. However, having to physically distance from someone you love – like friends, boyfriend or girlfriend, family or your [worship community](#) – can be hard. Adolescents may struggle



when asked to change their social routines – from choosing to skip in-person gatherings, to consistently wear masks in public settings. It is important for adults to help adolescents take personal responsibility to protect themselves and others, as well as support them in safely taking time to connect with friends and family

remotely.

Break in continuity of learning

School closures due to COVID-19 have meant that adolescents have been participating in learning from home. Online platforms and communities have become essential, as families turn to digital solutions more than ever to support students' learning. Unfortunately, the immediate need for



virtual learning environments brought to light inequity in resources, access and connectivity across families and communities. School closures have also meant a break in access to some essential developmental services like occupational, behavioral, or speech therapy. It could also have impeded continuity in adolescents' development of athletic or hands-on vocational skills, with potential impacts on their higher education and professional future. It is important to understand how virtual learning could make learning increasingly challenging for students with limited resources or special needs. Moreover, some children may experience anxiety about going back to school in-person or virtually. Some may also experience fatigue from online video conferencing—commonly referred to as “[zoom fatigue](#) [🔗](#).” Families, schools, and communities can join to troubleshoot ways to ensure the learning needs of all children are appropriately addressed.

Break in continuity of health care



Parents may have avoided seeking health care for their adolescents due to stay-at-home orders and may continue to do so because they are afraid of getting sick with COVID-19. This includes important [well-child visits](#), [immunizations](#) and [oral health care](#). Additionally, school closures have impacted

many adolescents' ability to receive mental health, speech therapy and occupational health services on campus. It is important to ensure adolescents receive continuity of health care, including continuing mental health, occupational and speech therapies (e.g. via telehealth), and receiving vaccines – including COVID-19, when it becomes available.

Missed significant life events

Physical distancing can feel as if one is placing life on hold. The truth is that the clock keeps ticking. Birthdays, graduations, proms, homecoming, vacation plans, births and funerals are just a sample of the many significant life events that adolescents may have missed experiencing during COVID-19. Social distancing, stay-at-home orders and limits to gatherings have affected their ability to gather in person with friends and family to celebrate or grieve in typical ways. [Grief](#) is a normal response to losing someone or something important to you. It is important for family and friends to help adolescents find alternate, creative and safe ways to connect and support each other at a distance.



Loss of security and safety



Job loss and lost wages affected the household income of many adolescents' families during COVID-19. Economic insecurity is consistently linked to adverse development, academic achievement, and health outcomes. It may affect adolescents' ability to consistently access healthy foods, safe transportation and

housing. Mounting economic stressors can increase their risk for exposure to violence. Along with stay-at-home orders during COVID-19, some adolescents may have been increasingly exposed to abuse and neglect, intimate partner violence at home, and sexual violence. Their increased online activity also puts them at [increased risk for online harms](#)  , such as online sexual exploitation, cyberbullying, online risk-taking behavior, and exposure to potentially harmful content. It is important for parents and other prosocial adults to maintain a trustworthy relationship and open communication with adolescents, watching for behavior changes that may signal distress.

What can you do?

Recognize and address fear and stress

[Adolescence](#) is a time of big changes.

Adolescents can

be particularly overwhelmed when stress is related to a [traumatic event](#), expressed as excessive worry or sadness, unhealthy eating or sleeping habits, and difficulty with attention and concentration. Adults can provide stability and support to [help them cope](#), as well as facilitate access to professional help and [distress emergency hotlines](#), as needed.

Steps to Help Provide Stability and Support to Adolescents

- Maintain a normal routine
- Talk, listen, and encourage expression
- Give honest and [accurate information](#)
- Teach simple steps to stay healthy
- Be alert for any change in behavior.
- Reassure adolescents about their safety and

Teach and reinforce everyday preventive actions

There are actions we can take to protect others, [prevent getting sick and slow the spread](#) of COVID-19. Encourage adolescents to be good role models— if they wash their hands often, stay at least 6 feet apart from others, and wear their [masks](#) in public spaces to help

protect themselves and others, then younger children – and even their peers – are more likely to do the same.

Help keep adolescents children healthy

Teach adolescents the importance of taking care of their health. Engage them in scheduling routine check and immunizations visits. Ensure continuity in their mental health and occupational health care. Encourage them to [eat healthy](#), [drink water](#) – instead of sugar sweetened beverages – for [strong teeth](#), [be physically active](#), or learn something new. It can [help them stay healthy](#) and focused.

Help adolescents stay socially connected

Encourage adolescents to reach out to friends and family via phone, video chats, social media, or even via video games. Schools may have tips and guidelines to help [support their social and emotional needs](#).

Resources

Explore different types of resources available to help support young adults' social, emotional and mental well-being during COVID-19 and beyond.

Door Hangers

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Door Hangers

These ready-to-print door hangers can serve as reminders for children, young people, and adults alike to remember some COVID-19 prevention and mitigation practices. Parents and children can also be inspired by these and make their own with paper and crayons or other art supplies. *This resource may be useful for children and young people of all ages.*



Mask

English 
Español 



Mask

English 
Español 



Handwashing

English 
Español 



Social
Distancing

English 
Español 

Conversation Starters

Get immediate help in a crisis and find a health care provider or treatment for substance use disorder and mental health.

Children and youth can be particularly overwhelmed by [stress](#) related to a traumatic event, like the COVID-19 pandemic. They may show stress through increased [anxiety](#), fear, sadness or worry. When children and youth are struggling to cope with stress, they may exhibit unhealthy [eating](#) or [sleeping](#) habits, changes in activity level, [substance use](#) or other risk behaviors, and difficulty with attention and concentration.

Parents, caregivers, and other trusted adults can serve as sources of social [connectedness](#); they can provide stability, support, and open communication. They can also help children and young people express the many different feelings and thoughts on their mind.

Here are some quick ideas for how to get conversations started with children and youth about how they are feeling and what they are struggling with, regarding COVID-19. You don't have to use these exact words – you know best how to speak with your child, adolescent or youth. In addition, how we talk to children and youth varies depending on their age and developmental level.

- COVID-19 is a new disease, which can be confusing. Do you have any questions about it? If I don't know the answer, I can try to find it or maybe we could search for it together.
- People can be angry, sad, or worried when something bad happens. Those feelings can make you feel confused or uncomfortable. Tell me what you have been feeling since the changes started.
- What worries you most about COVID-19?
- Have you been feeling nervous about going back to school because of COVID-19?
- Wearing masks and staying at a distance from others is not something we were used to doing. How do you feel about that?
- When our minds are stuck on bad things, it can be really hard to focus on other things. Have you ever felt this way? What kinds of things does your mind get stuck on?
- Is there anything that you are looking forward to, for when we can connect in-person more safely and return to more normal activities—like a vacation, movie, graduation or playing on a sports team? Tell me about what that might look like!

Some of these conversation starters are used in [Psychological First Aid \(PFA\)](#)   – an approach commonly used among disaster survivors to cope with trauma. PFA can be useful for parents to help children and young people cope by enabling and maintaining environments that promote safety, calmness, connectedness to others, self-efficacy (empowerment), and hopefulness. Remember: It's okay not to have an answer, just being there to listen in a non-judgmental way can be helpful!

Below are some resources to help you learn more about PFA and other tools for parents and caregivers to help children and youth cope:

- National Child Traumatic Stress Network
 - [Helping Children Cope with the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)   (Yale Child Study Center)
 - [Psychological First Aid: Field Operations Guide](#)  (2nd Edition)
- Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress, Uniformed Services University
 - [Psychological First Aid: How You Can Support Well-Being in Disaster Victims](#)  
 - [Discussing Coronavirus with Your Children](#)  
 - [Finding the Right Words to Talk with Children and Teens about Coronavirus](#)  

STEM and Other Activity Ideas

Let's get creative! Here are a few ideas on how to have fun while learning how to protect ourselves and others from COVID-19.

- **DIY masks:** Wearing a mask is a very important step that we can take to stop the spread of COVID-19. Make it a family project to create masks. Be creative and stylish. Here's a [video](#) on how to make your own mask.
- **DIY soap:** Handwashing is an easy, inexpensive, and effective way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other germs and keep kids and adults healthy. You can help your kids make their own soap! This resource from [PBS Kids for Parents](#)  tells you how.
- **Handwashing song:** Handwashing can become a lifelong healthy habit if you start teaching it at an early age. Teach kids the [five easy steps for handwashing](#)—wet, lather, scrub, rinse and dry—and the key times to wash hands, such as after using the bathroom or before eating. Make it fun! Make up your own handwashing song, or pick a song your child likes, and sing it for 20 seconds to help teach the length of time to wash your hands.

Children Preparedness

CDC has different resources for families to help their children be ready for emergencies.

- [Backpack Emergency Card](#) 
- [Family Communication Plan](#) 
- [Steps to Protect your Child during Emergencies in the School Day](#)
- [Children in Disasters Emergency Kit Checklists](#)
- [Ready Wrigley!](#)

Get Immediate Help in a Crisis

Young adults may experience [increased stress](#) during this pandemic. Fear and anxiety can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions. *These resources may be useful for parents and other caregivers, as well as older children and youth.*

Get immediate help in a crisis

- Call 911
- [Disaster Distress Helpline](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-985-5990 (press 2 for Spanish), or text TalkWithUs for English or Hablanos for Spanish to 66746. Spanish speakers from Puerto Rico can text Hablanos to 1-787-339-2663.
- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-273-TALK (8255) for English, 1-888-628-9454 for Spanish, or [Lifeline Crisis Chat](#) [↗](#) .
- [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-799-7233 or text LOVEIS to 22522
- [National Child Abuse Hotline](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-4AChild (1-800-422-4453) or text 1-800-422-4453
- [National Sexual Assault Hotline](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) or [Online Chat](#) [↗](#)
- [The Eldercare Locator](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-677-1116 [TTY Instructions](#) [↗](#)
- [Veteran's Crisis Line](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or [Crisis Chat](#) [↗](#) or text: 8388255

Find a health care provider or treatment for substance use disorder and mental health

- [SAMHSA's National Helpline](#) [↗](#) : 1-800-662-HELP (4357) and TTY 1-800-487-4889
- [Treatment Services Locator Website](#) [↗](#)
- [Interactive Map of Selected Federally Qualified Health Centers](#) [↗](#)

Other Information Resources

CDC and its federal partners have diverse web resources that can help parents/caregivers, teachers and other adults support children and youth's social, emotional, mental, and physical well-being:

- [Coping with Stress](#)
- [Helping Children Cope](#)
- [Helping Children Cope with Emergencies](#)
- [Talking to Children about Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)
- [Keep Children Healthy During the COVID-19 Outbreak](#)
- [Help Children Learn at Home](#)
- [Health Equity Considerations and Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups](#)
- [Handwashing: A Family Activity](#)
- [Routine Vaccination During the COVID-19 Outbreak](#)
- [Grief and Loss](#)
- [Essentials for Parenting Toddlers and Preschoolers](#)
- [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\)](#)

- [Positive Parenting Tips](#)
- [Children's Mental Health](#)
- [BAM! Body and Mind: Classroom Resources for Teachers](#)
- [VetoViolence](#)
- [StopBullying.gov](#) 
- [Youth.gov: Understanding and Coping with Trauma & Building Resiliency](#) 

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